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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPRN MPOL, PGOV, SHUM, AR, US, XF, RO, UK
SUBJECT: KISSINGER-MASSERA CONVERSATION

1. DURING HIS 5-DAY STAY IN BUENOS AIRES, DR. KISSINGER HAD A HALF-HOUR DISCUSSION WITH NAVY CHIEF AND JUNTA MEMBER ADMIRAL MASSERA -- AT THE LATTER'S REQUEST. THE MEETING TOOK PLACE AT THE ADMIRAL'S PRIVATE RESIDENCE. BEFORE ACCEPTING THE ADMIRAL'S INVITATION, DR. KISSINGER DISCREETLY CONSULTED THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT VIDELA, WHICH EXPRESSED NO OBJECTIONS.

2. FOLLOWING ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT MASSERA HAD TO SAY --
(A) HIS POLITICAL ADVERSARIES HAD PAINTED HIM AS AN OGRE WHO WAS ALSO ANTI-AMERICAN. NO MATTER WHAT THESE TONGUES MIGHT SAY, HE WAS NOT ANTI-US. DR. KISSINGER ASSURED THE ADMIRAL THAT HE HAD NEVER HEARD THAT THIS WAS THE CASE.

(B) THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN ARGENTINA -- OF WHICH HE WAS A MEMBER -- WAS HEADED FOR FAILURE, UNLESS STEPS WERE TAKEN TO CORRECT THE UNEQUAL AND UNJUST DISTRIBUTION OF THE ECONOMIC PIE AND UNLESS AN EFFORT WERE MADE TO MOVE THE COUNTRY DOWN THE
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PATH TOWARD POLITICAL DEMOCRACY. UNLESS THESE REMEDIAL MEASURES WERE TAKEN, THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS POPULAR UNREST WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF A LEFTIST TAKEOVER. THIS WAS THE SAD LEGACY OF PROLONGED MILITARY GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA, ACCORDING TO ADMIRAL MASSERA: THE LEFT WAS NOW ON THE RISE IN BRAZIL AND CHILE AS A

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REACTION TO YEARS OF MILITARY RULE. HAD IT NOT
BEEN FOR THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE WITH ARGENTINA,
PINOCHET BY NOW WOULD HAVE HAD A POLITICAL CRISIS
ON HIS HANDS ON ACCOUNT OF THE ECONOMIC POLICIES
HE HAS PURSUED. INDEED, PINOCHET HAD FANNED THE
INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE IN ORDER TO DIVERT THE
ATTENTION OF THE CHILEAN PEOPLE AWAY FROM DOMESTIC
PROBLEMS.

IN ARGENTINA, A SMALL GROUP OF FINANCIERS LED
BY ECONOMY MINISTER MARTINEZ DE HOZ AND ALLIED WITH
SECTORS OF THE ARMED FORCES WANTED A LONGTERM
MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IN ORDER TO PERMIT A CONTINUA-
TION OF THE SAME KIND OF ECONOMIC MODEL AS IN CHILE
WHICH CREATED UNJUST INEQUITIES FOR THE MASSES.
THE ARGENTINE FINANCIER CLASS ALSO SAW THE US AS
AN ALLY, MASSERA CAME CLOSE TO IMPLYING, AND THESE
OLIGARCHS PROPAGATED THE VIEW THAT THE US SUPPORTED
A CONTINUATION OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

THE US SHOULD PURSUE THE OPPOSITE COURSE, IN
MASSERA'S VIEW. IT SHOULD ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE ARGENTINA
TO ACCELERATE THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL DEMOCRATIZA-
TION. PRESSURES TO THIS END SHOULD BE BEGUN NOW
WITH A VIEW TO ACHIEVING A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL
SOLUTION WITHIN A YEAR OR TWO. HE -- MASSERA --
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IN HIS POSITION AS NAVY CHIEF AND ALSO ENJOYING THE
SUPPORT OF ELEMENTS IN THE OTHER SERVICES WAS LEADING
AN EFFORT TO RIGHT ECONOMIC WRONGS AND PAVE THE WAY
FOR A DEMOCRATIC OPENING. IN THE JUNTA, IT HAS BEEN
HE WHO HAS CHAMPIONED THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.
THANKS TO HIS EFFORTS, PUBLISHER JACOBO TIMERMAN
WAS NOT OUT OF JAIL. MASSERA WAS HOPEFUL THAT,
IF EVENTS COULD BE TIMED PROPERLY, A CENTRIST PARTY
WOULD EMERGE WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE BULK OF THE
LABOR MOVEMENT WHICH COULD ACT AS AN EFFECTIVE BULWARK
AGAINST LEFTIST INROADS.

(C) MASSERA ALSO ASKED FOR US SUPPORT FOR ARGENTINA
IN ITS TERRITORIAL DISPUTES WITH GREAT BRITAIN OVER
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS AND WITH CHILE OVER MARITIME
JURISDICTIONS IN THE SOUTH. THE SOVIETS HAD ASKED
ARGENTINA FOR BASES FOR THEIR FISHING FLEETS
IN ARGENTINA'S SOUTHERN PORTS. AT THE SAME TIME,
THERE WAS A DANGER THE BRITISH MIGHT CONCEDE SUCH
RIGHTS TO THE RUSSIANS IN THE FALKLANDS. THE
ARGENTINE NAVY HAD RESPONDED TO THE ENCROACHMENT
OF SOVIET TRAWLERS IN ARGENTINA WATERS WITH A FEW

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CANNON SHOTS. BUT UNLESS THE US WERE
TO COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF ARGENTINA IN THE
FALKLAND ISLAND DISPUTE WITH BRITAIN, IT WOULD BE-
COME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT POLITICALLY FOR THE
ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT TO STAND UP TO SOVIET PRESSURES
IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

(D) ON JUNE 27 HE WILL EMBARK ON A VISIT TO ROMANIA.
AT THE REQUEST OF PREMIER CEAUSESCU, HE WILL HELP
FORM A BLOC OF LATIN AMERICAN CHIEFS OF STATE AIMED
AT PROMOTING A NEW INITIATIVE TO GET THE ISRAELIS
AND ARABS TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. HE RECOGNIZED
THAT THE CHANCES OF SUCCESS WERE SLIM, BUT ONE HAD
TO DO WHAT ONE COULD FOR THE CAUSE OF WORLD PEACE*
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HE ASKED FOR KISSINGER'S ADVICE. KISSINGER WISHED
HIM WELL; IF HE FAILED, HE WAS, AFTER ALL, IN DIS-
TINGUISHED COMPANY.

(E) FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM ROMANIA, MASSERA
PLANS A PRIVATE TRIP TO THE US IN JULY. KISSINGER
SAID HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE THE ADMIRAL
SHOULD HE VISIT THE US.

3. COMMENT: MASSERA LEFT LITTLE DOUBT HE SEES
HIMSELF AS THE POLITICAL FIGURE WHO WILL PUT
TOGETHER WHAT HE CALLED A "CENTRIST" COALITION
WITH LABOR SUPPORT. MASSERA IMPRESSES ONE AS
A DANGEROUS MAN WHO APPROACHES SERIOUS FOREIGN
POLICY ISSUES IN MUCH THE SAME WAY A BIG
CITY POLITICAL BOSS MANIPULATES WARD POLITICS.
DR. KISSINGER COMMENTED AFTER THE MEETING THAT
MASSERA'S GAME WAS PERFECTLY CLEAR. HE WAS A
POLITICAL DEMAGOGUE IN THE MOLD OF PERON,
DR. KISSINGER THOUGHT, WHO WOULD PURSUE POPULIST,
ANTI-US POLICIES IF HE WERE EVER TO COME TO
POWER IN ARGENTINA.
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